

Use It Or Lose It!



What do astronauts spend more time doing in space than anything else? It's not scientific research. It's exercise.

No other activity except eating or sleeping is given that much attention. Two and a half hours each day are for exercising.

Why is it so important to exercise in space? If you don't, the body begins to **atrophy**. That means you start to shrink and get weak.

Weak astronauts cannot perform their jobs in space. If there were an emergency, they would need to be in good shape to get out of the Space Shuttle or Space Station. Once they land on Earth, the weakened muscles and bones would make walking hard.

Your muscles and breathing can be built back up with work. Researchers worry about bone loss. They are not sure if severe bone loss will cause problems in old age. Exercise can prevent these problems. It can increase the amount of blood in the body and improve **circulation**.



Astronauts work on three exercise machines. They use a stationary bicycle, a treadmill, and a weight lifting machine. The machines have belts and foot straps to keep the astronauts from floating away. Do you know why in space you lose more strength in your legs than in your arms? It's because you don't have to walk. You float!

Published by NASAexplores: January 17, 2002



National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

